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"MORMON" ACTIVITIES

An Answer to Questions Concerning the Practical Workings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

By ORSON F. WHITNEY

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

Salt Lake City, Utah
THE DESERET NEWS
1911

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PURPOSE OF THE PAMPHLET.

This pamphlet is called forth by inquiries that are continually being made concerning the matters set forth in these pages. In preparing a reply, the author has acted under the direction of the First Presidency of the Church, whose views, as well as his own, upon the subject treated, are herein expressed.

The immediate cause of the present publication is a letter of recent date from a gentleman in one of the Western States, soliciting the information now given. A few paragraphs from that letter will be a sufficient introduction to what follows. After stating that he and his associates had, from "Mormon" literature and other sources friendly to the Latter-day Saints, "imbibed many of their ideas," and in practical work had "followed some of their plans in industrial organizations," the writer of the letter goes on to say:

POINTS OF INQUIRY.

"The particular point which I would like information upon at this time, is as to the exact organization of the Church; that is, not in Church work itself, which I find explained in the Book of Mormon, which I have studied considerably, but in its practical every-day workings of a secular nature.

"I have enjoyed the acquaintance and friendship of William E. Smythe, of California, for many years, and he is one of the most able and friendly exponents of Mormon secular work and organizations.

"So far as I know, the Mormon Church is the only organization on the face of this Earth that not only seeks the spiritual welfare of its members, but (I was going to say what is of still greater importance) also sees to it that the life in a Mormon community is so organized that each and every individual, no matter how humble their station, has an equal chance first to live.

"Now, what I would like to learn, is just how this is accomplished. I have heard, too, that your leaders aid their people, not only financially, but, what is far more important, by wise counsel on the part of their successful members. * * *

"I presume that you are familiar with some of the features of Socialism, and the objects sought? I have given this matter some study, and while some of the work of American and other Socialists in their destruction of life and property is simply abhorrent to us, yet I believe the time will come that some of the ideas regarding the rights of the individual will receive more than passing consideration.

"It occurs to me that the work of the Mormon Church goes further in guaranteeing and protecting the rights of the individual, than any church or government yet organized, and I am surprised that this plan has not been carried out by other denominations.

"I am not a Socialist, nor could I be, with dynamiters and murderers as their leaders; but evidently a change is taking place, and it appears only a question of time until there will be a separation of the anarchistic element from the purely social one. * * *

"In conclusion, I would like to say, I have met and mingled with many of the prominent men of the Mormon Church; that the thing which especially impressed me has been their high moral character on all occasions; and when I observe their unusual, high intellectual character, patriotism, sincerity, and loyalty to themselves, I am per-

suaded that they are accomplishing a great work, and that no human power, outside of themselves, can stay their progress. * * *

"Several years ago, while visiting on the Mormon Temple grounds, the little card* which I am enclosing herewith was handed me, together with some other literature. I was interested in the 'Articles of Faith,' and checked off those with which I could agree. Articles 5 and 7 and a portion of 10 I am not entirely clear on. Kindly return this card to me with your reply."

*Following is the card here referred to:

Articles of Faith

Of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

3. We believe that, through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: First, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of Hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by "prophecy, and by the laying on of hands," by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the primitive church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc.

7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.

8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes. That Zion will be built upon this continent. That Christ will reign personally upon the earth, and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisical glory.

11. We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where or what they may.

12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers and magistrates, in obeying, honoring and sustaining the law.

13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to ALL MEN; indeed we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul, "We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy we seek after these things."

THE REPLY.

DEAR SIR:

A communication from you, dated April 2nd, has been handed to me for perusal, and with request for a reply containing information upon matters therein mentioned. You state that, so far as you know, "the Mormon Church is the only organization on the face of this Earth that not only seeks the spiritual welfare of its members, but * * * * also sees to it that the life in a Mormon community is so organized that each and every individual, no matter how humble their station, has an equal chance first to live;" and the particular point upon which you wish to be enlightened "is just how this is accomplished." In other words, you would like to know how the Church is organized with special reference to its "practical every-day workings," and how it ministers to insure the temporal welfare of its members. You also refer to certain of our Articles of Faith, and invite an explanation of them.

Responsive to the request made of me, and sharing in the general interest felt by the Latter-day Saints for the spread of correct information regarding themselves, their doctrines, aims, and institutions, I will do what I can to answer the questions that you raise.

To begin, then: There is no special organization, outside the Priesthood and its auxiliaries (helps in government), for the carrying on of the temporal work of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This Church is not a commercial institution, as has often been falsely asserted, nor does it conduct any line of secular business; though it has, from time to time, lent its aid,

financial and otherwise, toward the encouragement of various enterprises having as their objects the formation of new settlements, the redemption of arid lands, the development of natural resources, protection against savage tribes, floods, and other calamities, relief to sufferers from the same, and the promotion of colonizing, emigrational, industrial, and educational movements in general. The Church has always been interested in temporal activities, and has helped to establish mills, factories, co-operative stores, schools, hospitals, and infirmaries; but not for money-making purposes, except in so far as such ends might be made to subserve greater ones, namely, the redemption of a desert, the building up of a new country, the spread of civilization in its true sense, the support of the poor, the furnishing of labor to the unemployed, and the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual betterment of the community.

You intimate that you are already familiar with the general organization of the Church. No detailed explanation of it, therefore, seems necessary at this time. I will merely remark, in passing, that Presidents, Apostles, and Bishops all give counsel to the people on temporal matters, when it is needed, and from the first such men have led out in colonizing, agricultural, commercial, and industrial pursuits. The Stakes (divisions of the Church) and Wards (into which the Stakes are divided) are all thoroughly equipped with officers and institutions for carrying on the spiritual and temporal work entrusted to them.

In addition to the Priesthood organizations, and comprising the auxiliaries mentioned, are Sabbath Schools, Primary Associations, and Religion Classes, for the training of children in moral and religious life; Young Men's and Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Associations, for the instruction and entertainment of the youth of both sexes: Relief Societies and Old Folks committees, for the

care of the sick, the indigent, the aged and feeble. In all these organizations the principles of the Gospel are taught, and the spirit of the Gospel cultivated. That spirit, permeating the entire Church, makes the people willing to take good counsel, prompts them to cherish pure and high ideals, to follow upright examples, to love one another, to honor and maintain the law, and subject themselves to all wholesome, needful regulation and discipline. We are a self-governing people—there is no compulsion, no coercion. "It is all free grace and all free will." When Joseph Smith, the first President of the Church, was asked how he managed to govern people of so many nationalities, having different languages, customs, traditions, and prejudices, he replied: "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in the world for the salvation of souls. This is its mission—it has no other, unless we add to the idea of salvation that of exaltation, an extension of the same great theme. Our interest in the temporal welfare of men springs from the conviction that the soul includes the body, and that salvation is for time as well as for eternity. It is the soul of man—spirit and body combined—that walks the earth in mortality, and, after death, is redeemed from the grave by the power of Christ's resurrection; to receive, if found worthy, "a fullness of joy." Redemption (resurrection) comes to all, regardless of merit or demerit; but men must "work out their salvation." There is no "royal road" to eternal exaltation. "Mormonism," or the Gospel of Christ, proposes to save men here as well as hereafter—save them through their obedience to law. The Latter-day Saints hold that a religion which cannot make a man happy and successful in this life, cannot be depended upon to save and glorify him in the life to come.

To promote this dual idea of salvation and carry it

forward to its legitimate and practical results, two Priesthoods were placed in the Church by its divine Founder. You are aware, of course, that this Church claims to have been established, with a restoration of the Gospel, after ages of absence from the earth, by revelation from heaven. These two Priesthoods—the Aaronic and the Melchisedek—correspond to the duality of the soul, and to the two-fold purpose of the Gospel, "the power of God unto salvation." The Aaronic or lesser Priesthood typifies the body, having a jurisdiction in temporal things; while the Melchisedek or higher Priesthood, of which the Aaronic is an appendage, typifies the soul—spirit and body—and has jurisdiction over all things, spiritual and temporal. Without the authority of the Priesthood—which is the delegated authority of God—no man can represent God legitimately in any word or work whatsoever. Hence the pertinence and significance of the fifth Article of Faith, to which you refer:

"We believe that a man must be called of God, 'by prophecy and by the laying on of hands,' by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, who took the first steps toward organizing this Church, had been literally "called of God," and ordained to both these Priesthoods "by the laying on of hands" of heavenly messengers, sent to them for that purpose. After thus being empowered to represent Deity, they ordained others to assist them, and from that day to this, the work of the Church has been carried on by virtue of that divine authorization. Whatever success our people have had in any direction, is owing to that sacred commission, and to the spirit of the Gospel, the power of the Holy Ghost, without which the Church could accomplish nothing—could not even have an existence.

This being our attitude, it is only consistent that we

should have, among our Articles of Faith, the following (No. 7):

"We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc."

These are but manifestations of that divine power, the Spirit of God, which the true Church of Christ must always possess, in order to do its saving work and fully accomplish its sublime destiny.

Some of the great purposes in view are thus outlined in the tenth Article of Faith:

"We believe in the literal gathering of Israel, and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this Continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the Earth; and that the Earth will be renewed and receive its paradisical glory."

You are likewise aware, having read our history and doctrinal works, besides hearing "Mormon" preachers and coming in contact with some of our leading men, that Joseph Smith sought to introduce a religious-social system that would prepare the way before the coming of the King of Kings; a system which we believe will yet solve and settle the perplexing Capital and Labor problems that are now agitating and threatening the prosperity and welfare of the civilized world. The movement began in February, 1831, less than a year after the Church was organized, and within a few months the United Order, as it is commonly called, was in partial operation among the Latter-day Saints both at Kirtland, Ohio, and at Independence, Missouri. Under the workings of this divinely revealed plan, Zion, the City of God, was to be founded, as a central gathering place for the house of Joseph and the tribes of Israel his companions, excepting only the tribe of Judah, which will eventually reoccupy the land of Palestine and rebuild ancient Jerusalem. Here, upon the North American continent, the land of Joseph,

the land of Zion (as all America is), the New Jerusalem is to be built, and a people prepared for the glorious coming of the Lord.

The keynote of the United Order is this: "Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God." Preliminary to the attainment of such a condition, all properties possessed by members of the Church were to be consecrated to the common cause; and out of those properties stewardships were to be assigned—individual stewardships—to those who had made the consecration. The holders of stewardships were expected to manage them wisely and industriously for the general good; all gains reverting to a common fund, from which each steward would derive his or her support. Equality was to prevail, so far as it can prevail; not equality of ability and capacity, of course, nor necessarily of stewardships, which might differ as ability to manage much or little differs; but social equality, and equality of opportunity to achieve. Since all properties would be consecrated to the Lord for the benefit of the community, and all profits from the working of stewardships would go to enrich the community, its members would be equal in temporal as in spiritual things. There were to be no poor among them, and no drones in the hive—idleness eating the bread of industry. Honest service and upright living were required, and comfort and protection guaranteed. The community would prosper as a whole.

The United Order did not encourage lawlessness. It was not anarchy, but law and order; not socialism, but wise and good government—the government of God for the benefit of man. It sounded the death knell of monopoly, fraud, extortion, tyranny, based upon misuse of power and special privilege; and it proposed to do away with class distinctions, founded upon pride, vanity, and the worship of wealth. It would abolish such conditions,

but peacefully, and by common consent, not by violence. Doctrine, not dynamite; humility, not arrogant self-assertion; love of God and humanity, not envy and strife, were to effect the emancipation. While charitable and philanthropic in the highest sense, the United Order was no alms-giving concern, no eleemosynary institution. It did not propose to pauperize, by giving something for nothing. It meant employment for all—a place for everything and everything in its place. In short, it stood for justice, with every man in the secure possession and enjoyment of his own. It was designed to solve the problem of social redemption, in the only way that it can be solved, and put an end to the terrible bitterness, hatreds, and heart-burnings that now divide class and mass, and are as the smoldering fires of a sleeping volcano, liable to belch forth in whelming ruin upon the world.

The United Order was not permanently established, nor did its original workings long continue. Human selfishness within, inhuman persecution without, were the two-fold cause. The Church, driven from place to place, found it impracticable, with an imperfect acceptance by its members of the divine law of consecration, to build up Zion at that early day in the place that had been appointed. The system, therefore, went into abeyance, and the work of organizing Stakes of Zion, preparatory to the founding of Zion proper, has since engrossed the attention of the Church. But the great event has only been postponed. The realization of the ideal is still in prospect. The United Order, with all that it implies, will yet be established—must be, for Zion cannot be built up without it.

Meanwhile the spirit and genius of that Order has remained with the Church, and has influenced its people, more or less, in all the moves that they have made, in all the enterprises that they have undertaken. The spirit of brotherhood, of co-operation, of mutual helpfulness, has

characterized them in all their proselyting, colonizing, commercial, industrial, and educational activities.

The Pioneers of Utah and the immigrants who followed in their wake and helped them to found the earliest settlement in the Rocky Mountain region, were actuated by such feelings. Those who came first into these mountain solitudes, these unoccupied valleys, could have made great "land grabs" if they had felt so disposed, and enriched themselves at the expense of their fellows who came later. But this was not their disposition, nor their desire. It would have been directly contrary to the spirit of their religion and to the principles of the Gospel, for the sake of which they had become exiles from the borders of civilization. Under the leadership and counsel of men imbued with the genius of the United Order, and who set the example themselves, and asked the people to follow it, those early settlers contented themselves with moderate possessions. The real estate was distributed among all the members of the community, each one getting a share. Many of those first upon the ground gave to others who arrived in after years. There was no monopoly of land or water in the Pioneer colony, nor in any of the colonies that sprang from it. Small holdings were the rule. It was a maxim in the community that a man should own no more land than he could cultivate. Each settler was given a town lot and a field on the outskirts. He was expected to take good care of them, and be industrious and provident. These pieces of real estate were distributed by lot, each holder paying a nominal fee to meet the expenses of surveying and recording. In return, a temporary right of occupancy was given, contingent upon the grant of the United States Government when the Federal land laws should be extended over the newly acquired region, ceded by Mexico. A town lot contained an acre and a quarter, and a field, five, ten or twenty acres. The average farm in Utah at the present time is about

forty acres, three or four times smaller than the average farm in the State of Kansas.

The altruistic spirit of the "Mormon" community was strikingly shown during certain periods following the original occupancy of Salt Lake Valley, when drought, frost, and the ravages of crickets and grasshoppers brought scarcity and threatened famine to the struggling people. In those days of privation many put their families upon rations, and were driven to the necessity of digging and eating roots—the sego, the artichoke, and other wild growths—to eke out an existence between the harvest times. All were not alike destitute. Some, foreseeing the straitness, provided against it, and their bins and barns were full, while others were empty. Those who had, gave to those who had not, the full larders and storehouses being drawn upon to supply the needy and prevent suffering. More than one provident, well-to-do citizen stood as a Joseph in Egypt to the hungry multitude. They took no advantage of their neighbors. Where they did not give outright, as was often the case, they sold at moderate prices their beef and bread-stuffs to those able to reimburse them. When flour commanded as high as a dollar a pound, these big-souled men, who were generally leading authorities of the Church, would not accept more than six cents a pound; nor would they sell at all except to those in need, refusing to speculate, or encourage others to speculate, out of the necessities of the poor. This splendid philanthropy was due to the spirit of the Gospel, the spirit of the United Order, the spirit that will yet redeem Zion and prepare a people for that era of brotherhood, righteousness and peace that is synonymous with the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Meanwhile the law of tithing—a lesser law than the law of consecration—is in general observance throughout the Church, and its practice is regarded as a preparatory discipline toward the ultimate and complete estab-

lishment of the United Order. Tithing, be it understood, is not an assessment, not a tax, but a purely voluntary contribution—a fruit of that spirit of intelligent willingness to which reference has already been made—a reverential recognition of the authority of God's Priesthood and the claims of the Everlasting Gospel, the spirit of which prompts and induces obedience to this sacred law. A tenth of one's surplus property to begin with, and thereafter a tenth of one's interest annually, is the substance of the law of tithing. The revenues arising therefrom, with fast offerings and other donations, enable the Church to care for its poor, to build temples and houses of worship, to found and maintain institutions of learning, to help worthy and struggling institutions or individuals, and, in short, to carry on its spiritual-temporal work.

The Church, in its temporal department, is presided over by the Bishopric, the highest calling in the Aaronic Priesthood; but the Bishops receive and disburse the Church revenues under the direction of the First Presidency, or other authorities of the Melchisedek Priesthood representing that Presidency in the various Stakes of Zion. For the adjudication of difficulties that may arise between Church members from time to time, there are Bishops' Courts and High Councils, which serve without pay and with the pure desire to conserve peace and promote good feeling among the people. There are also Teachers, who act as arbitrators in the same spirit and for like purposes. The services of the Teacher as peacemaker precede recourse to the Ward and Stake tribunals, and even before the Teacher is called in, the disagreeing parties are under obligation to divine law and to the spirit of the Gospel, to settle, if possible, their difficulties between themselves.

In conclusion, my dear sir, what I most wish to impress upon you is this: Human wisdom alone would have

been powerless even to conceive of the problems with which the Latter-day Saints have had to grapple from the beginning of their history as a people. If they have succeeded, even in part, where others have failed, in solving problems affecting the temporal welfare of men, it is not because of any superior native sagacity that they possess, and is due but in small part to their acquired experience. They claim no credit, desiring only that God shall be glorified; for to Him they owe all. We have no faith whatever that any man or any set of men, however good their intentions, will succeed in working out their salvation, temporally or spiritually, independently of the great Author of salvation, whose very warrant for the sacrifice made by Him to redeem a fallen world, was the fact that something had to be done for man that man could not do for himself.

Man needs God's help. God is willing to give that help. Why should not man accept it? Why waste time, means, and effort in futile human schemes that have spelled failure from the beginning and will spell failure down to the end? These repeated failures, with their blighting disappointments, should have taught man by this time that he is powerless to redeem himself. A Millennium without a God is impossible. Social redemption without religion—the most powerful motive and impulse that can sway the selfish human heart—is Utopian, impracticable. The Spirit of the Lord must reinforce human energy and human skill, or all human effort will be unavailing. God's way, not man's way, must be adopted and pursued, in order to bring about the desired result.

With kindest regards and best wishes, I am

Yours sincerely,

ORSON F. WHITNEY.

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